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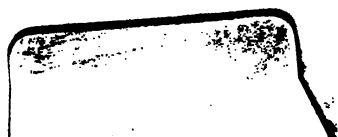
BABY

MESSENGERS:

AND OTHER

FRAGMENTS FOR LEISURE MOMENTS.









# BABY MESSENGERS;

AND OTHER

*Fragments for Spare Moments.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE RECLAIMED FORTUNE TELLER."



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THE following pages speak for themselves, and need no introduction. Suffice it is to say that every incident recorded is strictly true, and drawn from personal experience.

E. S.









TO

**My dear Sister**

**AND FELLOW-WORKER IN THE**

**MASTER'S VINEYARD**

**I DEDICATE**

**THESE FRAGMENTS.**





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I.

## BABY MESSENGERS.



“The same fire will harden clay, and melt wax.”





## *BABY MESSENGERS.*

—o—

**T**WO little corpses lay side by side on the same bed in a cottage home, and bending over them was their weeping mother. At the bedside stood a lady, who having arranged some white flowers in the form of a cross on the breast of each of the little ones, proposed to the sorrowing mother that they should kneel and seek the comfort she so much needed.

Often had this lady talked and prayed with Mrs. Lake before, when all was bright and prosperous, and earnestly had she tried to persuade her "to taste and see that the Lord is good," but all in vain, and now had come this crushing sorrow.

Was it that God (seeing that while all was prosperous she would never turn

and seek His face, and that she loved her children better than Himself) had in mercy taken them from her, that she might now set her affection on things above?

It was strongly urged upon her that this should be the turning point of her life, and that from this time she should seek first the kingdom of heaven.

At times the lady had hopes that there was some amount of anxiety on account of sins unrepented of and unforgiven, but the moment of decision for God was always put off to a "more convenient season."

A few months later Mrs. Lake left the neighbourhood, and the lady heard no more of her for two or three years, when in visiting a sick person one day, she found her old friend in the same house, having just returned to the town. Much had happened during that time, and Mrs. Lake had to tell of another little one being "taken home," adding, "I know, ma'am, it was another message from God, for He has often striven with me since I saw you."

*And had she been all this time resisting*

the strivings of the Holy Ghost? Yes, she owned that though she knew God had been knocking at the door of her heart, she had kept it closed against Him. Earnest words were spoken to her, warning her to open the door before it was too late, and she was even reminded of the words, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."\* Hopefully her friend watched for some change, but with sorrow she saw that she watched in vain.

\* \* \* \*

"Have you heard that Mrs. Lake is very ill,—probably dying?" inquired the Vicar of the parish, as he met the lady one day returning from an afternoon of parish visiting,—“I know you are interested in her.”

No; she had not heard it, for she had not visited that house during the past few days, and on the occasion of her last visit the woman had seemed in perfect health.

It was a winter afternoon, and darkness was quickly coming on, but the lady turned at once in the direction of the cottage, and

\* Genesis vi. 3.



in less than ten minutes was almost breathlessly knocking at the door.

"I have only just heard of your wife's illness; how is she this evening?" she inquired of the husband who opened the door.

"She's dead, ma'am—died this morning; will you please to come in?"

Feeling almost stunned by such an answer to her question, the lady entered the cottage, and was taken to the chamber of death by a woman who had nursed Mrs. Lake during her illness. "How long had she been ill?" "Only two days." "In what state of mind did she appear to be?" was then anxiously asked. "Oh, she kept all on saying that it was no good to seek God now, that it was too late; but she said, ma'am, that she would like to have seen you, for she thought if only you had been there to talk to her, she might have died happy."

"She was mistaken," said the lady; "it is not the poor feeble words of a human friend that can enable a person to die

happy, but rather a firm trust in, and love to the Saviour, and the assurance that He has washed away all stain of sin in His own precious blood ;—but why, oh, why was I not sent for, if she expressed any wish to see me?" "Well, ma'am, her husband said he didn't like to send and trouble you." Mistaken kindness! for Mrs. Lake's dying and unfulfilled wish long haunted the visitor.

As she passed out through the kitchen, she stopped to speak a few solemn words to the husband and neighbours who were gathered together, and to kneel with them in prayer, and then, with a sad heart, she turned her steps towards home, the words running in her mind, "having no hope and without God in the world."†

\* \* \*

A LITTLE child lay on its mother's lap, and bending over it stood the father, sorrow and anxiety written on every feature of his countenance. Its hours were apparently numbered, but could it be that those

† Ephesians ii. 12.

parents were to part from their child? The father's favourite child, the very apple of his eye! Only a few weeks before he had been persuaded to give up the drink which he had loved too well, and which had proved the curse of his life. During those few weeks, he had been, Sunday by Sunday, to a place of worship, and seemed to be gradually becoming interested in hearing about God. And could it be that now he must part with this darling of his heart? Would it not make him disbelieve in God's love, and send him back to the drink to drown his grief? So argued the faithless hearts of those who had been long seeking to win this man from his evil ways; but "God's ways are not as our ways."

One more day of anxiety, and the little lamb was safely gathered into the Heavenly Shepherd's fold.

And what was the result of this bereavement on the father?

Broken-hearted indeed he was, but like Manasseh,\* in his affliction he sought and

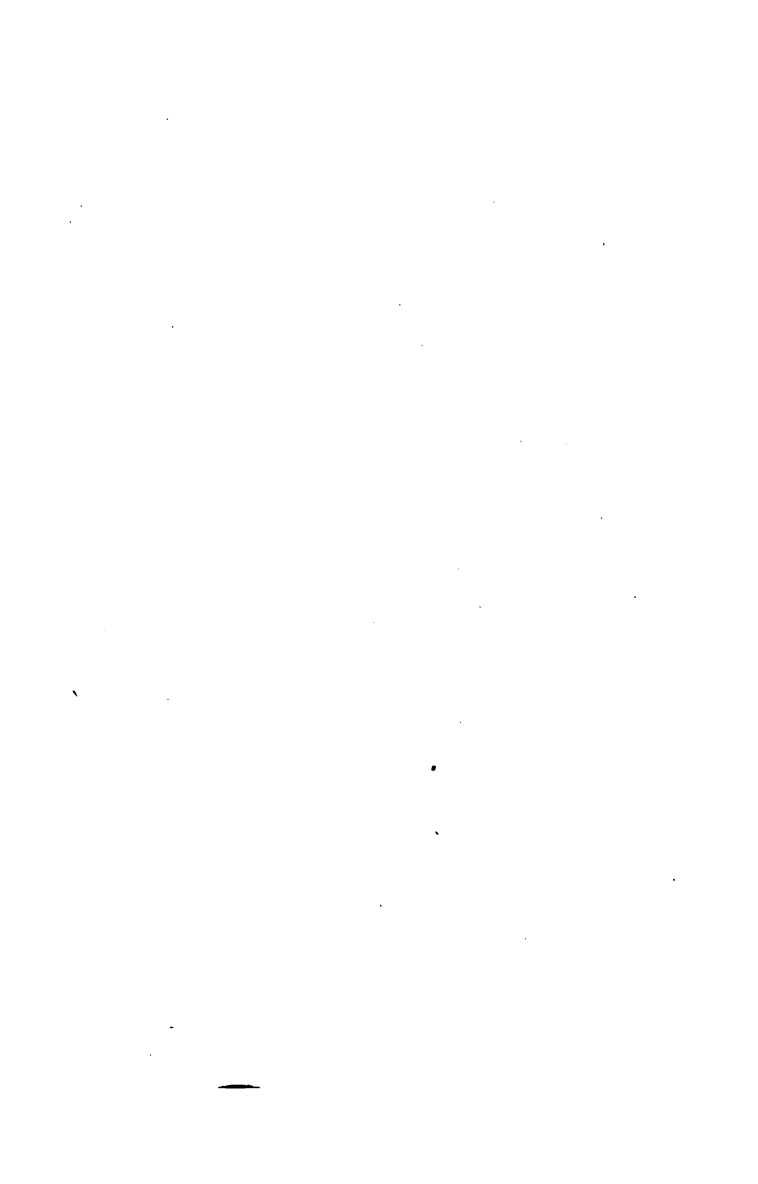
\* 2 Chron., xxxiii. 12.

found the Lord, and before long the poor father could thank God who had used this "baby messenger" to reveal to him the love of Christ.

"There was a shepherd and he had a flock, and in the flock was one sheep with a little lamb by its side. Now the sheep loved the lamb very dearly, and followed the lamb wherever it went, and strayed away after the lamb, far away from the fold. Then the shepherd, who saw that the sheep might be lost, and the lamb too, in some pit, or on some wild moor, caught up and carried the lamb in his arms away to the fold. And the sheep came meekly and patiently by the shepherd's side. Then it followed the shepherd for he had the lamb too."\*

\* Quotation from a sermon.





II.

THE WORD OF GOD.

---

“ Lord, Thy word abideth,  
And our footsteps guideth ;  
Who its truth believeth,  
Light and joy receiveth.

. . . . .

Word of mercy, giving  
Succour to the living ;  
Word of life, supplying  
Comfort to the dying.”

*Sir H. W. Baker, Bart.*





## *THE WORD OF GOD.*

—o—

**H**Y, Davy, that is a very short lesson to have brought me," said a lady to one of the little scholars of a class, which she was teaching one Sunday morning in the place of an absent friend;—"your verse is only one line long; I think you might have learnt the next verse with it." Hanging his head down and looking as if he were half ashamed of his own words he replied, "I shouldn't get any more marks if I did, teacher."

The teacher tried to explain to him that the Bible was God's letter to man, and that even if he did not care now to know what that letter contained, yet she hoped the day would soon come when He loved God, and then he would like to know all that God had said to him in His letter, and he would feel very thankful to those who had



made him learn it when he was a little boy. And as the lady talked to her scholar, she thought of a conversation she had had a few months since, with a working man, who had about two years before become a very earnest Christian. He was saying how much he valued any opportunity of hearing God's Word read and explained; "for you see, ma'am," he said, "I seemed as if I had got everything to learn when I turned to God. I didn't know scarce anything about the Bible, and I had to set to work at it. It isn't that I'm such a bad scholar, for there are many worse than me, though I'd be glad to be a deal better one than I am; but somehow I had never been in the way of reading the Bible."

"But were you not taught it in the Sunday-school, or in your own home, when you were a child?" was asked.

"Well, ma'am, I left off going to Sunday-school almost before I knew anything, and I was never taught it in my own home; and now, I can tell you, ma'am, that I do

feel the miss of it. I know some fellows who used to care just as little about religion as I did, and now that they have turned the other way, they find that they remember a lot they were taught when they were children, and it do come in so handy. They often tell me that verses and bits come popping into their heads just when they want them, that they haven't thought of since they learnt them in the Sunday-school."

Dear Sunday-school teachers, consider this and take courage ! Does it sometimes seem to you that your teaching is all to no purpose because you fail to see the effect that you so earnestly look for on the children's minds ? How can you tell that many years hence one of those little ones when grown to man's or woman's estate may not be helped to resist some fierce temptation by the thought of some verse from God's Word that you have taught them ?

Picture to yourself the soldier in a foreign land, wounded and lying in a hospital. He has perhaps spent his life in the service of

the world and its unsatisfying pleasures, and now as he lies there he thinks over the past with shame and sorrow. He thinks too of his childhood, and remembers the days when Sunday by Sunday he went to school; he fancies he hears again the kind voice of his teacher telling him the story of the son who left his father's home, and wandered far away from his protecting love into the paths of sin and vice, and as he goes over in his mind that story, which he has not thought of for years, he is struck with the likeness of his own life to the life of the young man in the parable, and he says to himself, "I too have wandered far away from God, but I too 'will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee.'"<sup>\*</sup> So shall the word which you have been permitted to teach, bear fruit "after many days." Shall we not then endeavour lovingly to instil into the hearts of the little ones committed to our charge the importance of being well ac-

<sup>\*</sup> S. Luke xv. 18.

acquainted with the scriptures, and the blessing and comfort it may be to them in after years! "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."\*

An old woman once said, in speaking of the Bible, "It was the guide of my youth, it is the staff of my old age; it wounded and it healed me; it condemned and it acquitted me; it shewed me I was a sinner and it led me to a Saviour; it has been my comfort in life, and I believe it will be my hope in death."

Let us then do our part, that those who are growing up to be the future fathers and mothers of our land may be well acquainted with the contents of such a Book.

"The word of God shall still endure,  
Faithful, immutable, and sure;  
This solid rock shall never break,  
Though earth should to her centre shake:  
And while it stands we should not fear,  
For all we need is promised there."

\* Eccles. xi. 6.



### III.

## INFLUENCE.

---

“If you be a Christian indeed yourself, you will influence others to become Christians by the *power of your example*.

“There is power in goodness. Its very existence has a force, and gives out a silent influence on all around it.

“No man lives to himself, much less a true Christian.”


*Rev. F. Morse, M.A.*





## *INFLUENCE.*



 LADY was spending the Sunday in a strange town, and was taking a stroll in the afternoon, when in the course of her walk she came to a church, and seeing the door open she entered.

It still wanted half an hour to the time for divine service, and consequently the church was empty save for one pew-opener, who hearing footsteps approached her from the east end.


The church had a gallery all round it, and the pews were high and old-fashioned. Up the centre of the middle aisle was a row of free sittings, and these, like the pews, had high backs.

The stranger had scarcely entered the aisle, and was about to ask the pew-opener to find her a sitting, when her dress caught



in the first of the free seats and knocked it over. She sprang forward to lift it up, but before she could do so, it had pushed forward the next bench, and that one again had fallen on to the next, all the benches being unoccupied, and consequently top-heavy. In vain she tried to overtake the falling benches, but they fell faster than she could run, and in fewer moments than it takes to tell it, every one of them lay on the ground.

She could only express her extreme regret to the pew-opener, who was most good-natured over the catastrophe, and in a few minutes they had together replaced the benches in their original position. This trifling incident, however, taught her a lesson which she never forgot. She had carelessly upset one bench, and not all her efforts could avail to stop the fall of every bench in the row. In the same way, does not one step thoughtlessly or wrongly taken, sometimes cause consequences which we would give much to undo, but find to our sorrow that the mischief is already done. It



has been said that we cannot speak without influencing some person either for good or evil, and when we remember that each one we influence will in his turn influence others, how careful should it make us over every word and action, lest our influence should be for evil and not for good.

Look at the stone thrown into the water, only touching one tiny spot, and at first only causing one tiny ring to form round it, but watch how these rings increase, and how round each ring there forms a larger one, till a great portion of the surface of the water is affected by one little stone.

I remember hearing of a young man who at a friend's dinner table heard another gentleman ask a question of a clergyman sitting near him. The answer consisted of a very few simple words, and was not even addressed to the young man himself, yet it had an influence over his whole life from that time, and eventually led to his becoming a totally different character, and an earnest worker for God.

It may be that some word quickly spoken

by us and as quickly forgotten, has influenced some person for good or evil, to an extent that we shall only know at the last day.

Let us remember that if we profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are expected to "shine as lights in the world." \* May ours be the "shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." †

"Can that man be dead  
Whose spiritual influence is upon his kind?  
He lives in glory, and such speaking dust  
Has more of life than half its breathing mould."

*L. E. L.*

\* Phil. ii. 15.

† Prov. iv. 18.



#### IV.

## THE SURE FOUNDATION.

---

“Build your nest upon no tree here, for God hath sold the forest to death, and every tree whereupon we would rest, is ready to be cut down, to the end we may flee, and mount up, and build upon the Rock.”

*Rutherford.*





## *THE SURE FOUNDATION.*



**W**HEN I, and my brothers and sisters were children, my father and mother used to take us to the sea-side every year. Oh! what happy times those were, and with what pleasure we even now look back upon them. On one occasion we visited a quiet little watering place in the Isle of Wight, and one bright afternoon a merry party of boys and girls might have been seen on their way to the sands with their spades and pails. They had agreed to build a house, and it was to be as like a real one as they could make it. The house with its garden was at last complete. The windows were cut out, the roof and garden wall were made of grey pebbles; green sea-weed was made to creep up the sides of the house to represent ivy,

the flower-beds were planted with various coloured sea-weeds, a path was made through the garden and up to the front door and paved with the smallest stones that could be found. It was considered a great success, and the little builders of the house did not tire of admiring their handiwork till it was time to leave the sands and go home to tea.


Even then their conversation was of "the house," and what improvements they could still make on their return to it. Eagerly they ran the following morning to the scene of their labours, but what was their dismay to find no trace whatever of their building! Foolish children! they had forgotten that the tide was sure to come and sweep it all away. The disappointment was great, but it did not last long, for soon it was suggested that they should build another house, "just like it, only better," on a large flat rock, over which the waves seldom, if ever, washed. The sand and pebbles were quickly carried up in baskets and pails, and soon there ap-

peared another house even more complete in its arrangements than the first, and many a passer-by stopped to notice and admire this work of art, which remained in existence during the whole of their sea-side visit, being kept in constant repair by the children.

“Foolish children”! we said, to forget that the tide would soon come and sweep their house away, but surely not more foolish than those who build all their hopes of happiness on the pleasures, the vanities, the riches of this world, forgetting that “the fashion of this world passeth away.”

“Oh set not thy heart on the treasure of earth !  
See the profit how fruitless, how fleeting the mirth!  
Immortal thy spirit, immortal thy joy,  
In the realms where nor sorrow nor death may  
destroy :  
Then live for the riches which never decay,  
For the fashion of this world passeth away.

If the world should entice thee with flattering  
voice,  
Remember eternity hangs on thy choice ;





Remember thy Lord, who on Calvary died,  
That a place might be ready for thee at His side:  
Then claim the fair crown that endureth for aye,  
For the fashion of this world passeth away."

G. S. S.

Let us rather be like the "wise man which built his house upon a rock."\* Earnestly let us pray, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."†

But let us not forget that we are expected to *build* upon the Rock; let us not rest satisfied with the assurance that we are safe because we are *on* the Rock. Has Christ only redeemed us that He might save us from hell? Was it not rather that He might fit us for heaven? "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."‡

Firmly resting, then, on this foundation, even the atonement made by our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."§

\* S. Matt. vii. 24.

† Psalm lxi. 2.

‡ Titus ii. 14.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 10.

The life influenced by the Holy Spirit must be holy ("Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless,"\*) and the hands strengthened by the same Spirit must be ready to every good work ("That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works,"†); at the same time bearing in mind that it is written in the same chapter, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."‡

As the house which the children built on the rock attracted the notice of passers-by, so the world cannot fail to notice the holy life and good works of the consistent followers of Christ, and seeing their good works, they may be led to "glorify their Father which is in heaven."§

Let us remember that the only opinion the world forms of the life and character of our Divine Master is from the life and character of His followers. May our life

\* 2 Peter iii. 14.

† Titus iii. 8.

‡ Titus iii. 5.

§ Matt. v. 16.

be such as to convince them that He is the "chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely." \*

"So let our lips and lives express  
The holy gospel we profess ;  
So let our works and virtues shine  
To prove the doctrine all divine."

\* Cant. v. 10 and 16.



V.

## "FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH."

---

"And then with Him go hand in hand  
Far into bliss."

*Dean Alford.*





*“FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.”*



“**MAY** I come up and see you?” asked the District Visitor, as she stood at the foot of the rickety stairs which led from the little brick floored kitchen to the tiny bedroom above.

“To be sure you may, my dear,” answered a quavering voice, feeble with age; and the visitor, scarcely more than a girl in years, at once mounted the staircase. In a very poorly furnished room, containing barely the necessary articles of furniture, there lay an old woman on a bed quite alone. She had been ill for some time, and had been constantly visited by her young District Visitor, who, very new at her work, greatly valued these visits to the aged saint, whose long and deep experience in the things of God, she found

a great help to her, beginning as she now was to tread the path which leads to life eternal. Hitherto she had always found her old friend sitting by the kitchen fire-side, but to-day she had been too feeble to leave her bed.

"I'm afraid you are not so well to-day?" said the girl, approaching the bed-side.

"No, dear; I could not get down to-day, so I'm forced to lie here."

"But you ought not to be quite alone. Could not your daughter stay with you?"

"No, dear; you see she would lose her place if she did not go reg'lar."

"And is there no one to come in and be with you; are you not very lonely?"

"Oh, there's one or two of the neighbours looks in now and then to see if I want anything; but don't you go for to fret about me, for I'm not a bit lonely. The Lord takes care of me, and He's with me all the time. I lie here and talk to Him, and He puts such blessed words into

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my mind. You see I've known Him such a many years that I've got to feel as if I was talking to some one close by me, and so I don't feel a bit lonely."

And thus they talked on, the young inexperienced Christian, just setting out on the journey of life, learning many a lesson from the aged saint, who had fought the good fight and had finished her course, and who was so soon to be taken home. What a help it is to the young believer to meet with such a one, who has tried and proved that God is all, and more than all, that He has promised to be, to those that put their trust in Him. These visits were daily repeated for some time, but at last there came a day when the young visitor found her old friend groaning in terrible pain. She did all she could to alleviate the suffering, and having re-arranged the pillows, she stood by the bedside, and slowly repeated one or two passages from God's word, feeling as she did so how unfit she was to minister spiritual comfort to such a one as this dying Christian.



"Pray, dear, pray," at last said the suffering one.

"Shall I pray aloud?" asked the young visitor in some hesitation, for she had never before attempted to pray with any of those whom she had lately begun to visit.

"Aye, dear, aye; let me hear it."

"Shall I ask God to take away the pain?"

The old woman turned her head, and opening her eyes fixed them almost sternly on the girl as she said, "No, don't ask Him *that*."

"Shall I ask Him then to be very present with you, and to give you grace and strength to bear it?"

"Aye, that's it, dearie, that's it," she answered with a sweet smile, and in a few simple words the young visitor made known her requests to God. A calm peace seemed to settle on the dear old woman's wrinkled face, and through all the suffering there came a smile of peace and rest, as she bade farewell to her young friend.

That night she passed away to the home prepared for those who love the Lord Jesus, but the young visitor never forgot the counsels of her aged friend, and often when dealing with the sins and sorrows of others, and in leading them in prayer to the throne of grace, she remembered with thankfulness the first time that she had been led to utter aloud a few simple petitions at the bedside of the dying saint.

Dear Christians, will not you too, who have long been fighting for your Master, and who are now past active service for Him, still do your part by helping on and encouraging those who are just stepping into the ranks in which you have so long served? "Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees."\*

"Lord, make me faithful unto death,  
Thy witness with my latest breath;  
To tell the glories of the Lamb,  
Him whom I serve, and whose I am;  
On whom for strength I daily lean,  
Whose strength is in my weakness seen?"

\* Heb. xii. 12.



VI.

"WHAT CAN I DO?"

---

"Let none hear you idly saying  
There is nothing I can do,  
While the souls of men are dying,  
And the Master calls for you.  
Take the task He gives you gladly,  
Let His work your pleasure be ;  
Answer quickly when he calleth,  
Here am I, send me, send me."

*D. March.*





## *“WHAT CAN I DO?”*



“Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.”—Isaiah lvii. 14.

**W**HAT intemperance is the crying sin of our land, all are ready to admit. We grieve to think that such a blot is upon our beloved country, and probably there is no right-thinking person who would not be glad to do anything in his power to remove it. But if the language of most hearts could be expressed in words, would it not be something like this, “How can *I* help in the matter? Had I the reins of government in my hands I could without doubt accomplish much, but as I am never likely to be in authority, what can I do?”

It is to answer this question, and to prove that we, as private individuals having

no special weight of position or influence, can do much towards checking the drinking customs so prevalent amongst us, that the following suggestions are offered.

1. Let us use our influence against the common practice of giving beer and spirits to pianoforte-tuners, workmen in the house, dustmen, cabmen on winter nights, and others; for many such—now confirmed drunkards—trace back the love of drink to this mistaken kindness. Rather let us cultivate the happy knack, which some persons have to an enviable degree, of always having the kettle "on the boil," so as to be able at a moment's notice to offer a cup of tea and a slice of bread-and-butter. Experience has taught that this plan answers well, and is appreciated.

2. It may be advantageous to withhold "Christmas boxes" till after Christmas festivities are well over. The very fact of having money in the pocket often proves too great a temptation for the possessor, whereas it might be well expended when temptation is not at hand.

3. Let us avoid sending wine to the sick poor. Experience shows that the sick person often gets less of the wine than any person in the house ; the nurse or relatives sometimes partaking to an extent which renders them useless in attending on the invalid. In the present day, when some of our leading medical men pronounce alcohol in any form to be quite unnecessary for those in health, and generally injurious to those out of health, would it not be better to send strong beef tea, or soup, or meat, if it can be eaten? If wine *is* sent, there should invariably be a medical certificate, and it is very necessary to ascertain that both date and signature are genuine. Some persons have thought it wise to flavour the wine with quinine or bark, that it may be considered as medicine.

4. Let us do all we can towards establishing and supporting "British Workman Public Houses," *cafés*, and cocoa and coffee street-stalls and barrows. Those who have influence in fields where cricket matches,



athletic sports, &c., are held, might suggest that non-alcoholic beverages should be plentifully supplied; for often there are none, and men and boys are thus constantly driven to partake of dangerous drinks, because harmless ones are not provided. For the same reason let us encourage the erection of drinking fountains. We should like to see one in every street, if not outside every public-house!

5. If we have any influence with employers, let us represent to them the evil consequences of paying their workmen in the public-house. Many a man has taken one glass "for the good of the house," rather than be thought mean and stingy, and having been induced to take one glass he has been easily persuaded to take a second and a third, and has not stopped drinking, or treating his companions, until a large hole is made in his newly-received wages, which might not have been the case had he been paid elsewhere.

6. It is well to avoid giving as wedding presents, decanters, wine-coolers, &c.; and

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as prizes at schools, or in clubs, tankards and goblets.

7. It is a good plan to be provided with a small stock of well-selected Temperance literature, and to disseminate it as opportunity offers. This may lead some who have never thought about the matter to give it their serious consideration, and may also tend to counteract the great ignorance and mistaken notions which are so prevalent on the Temperance question.

8. Let us discourage the use of stimulants at children's parties, and, indeed, amongst children at all times. How often do we see wine given to the little ones as "a treat" on birthdays and other festive occasions, or a sip given from the parents' wine-glass!—thus almost unconsciously creating and encouraging in them a desire for that which, in too many cases, eventually proves their ruin. If children are brought up entirely without stimulants it is very unlikely they will adopt the use of them as they grow up.

9. All who are Sunday-school superin-

tendents or teachers should take care that Temperance finds a place in the instruction of those under their care. When we find from statistics that about three-fourths of those committed for drunkenness have been Sunday scholars, the importance of this subject becomes apparent.

10. Let us discountenance to the utmost of our power, whether in public or in private, the drinking of healths or toasts (at all events, in stimulants). This applies also to the custom of giving wine to servants on such occasions as birthdays and christenings. It might be suggested that under such circumstances fruit should be substituted, which would probably prove equally acceptable.

11. Let us make this matter a special subject of prayer.

Let us pray—

(1.) That the blessing of God may rest upon all efforts made in this cause, so that the results may tend to the temporal and spiritual welfare of our fellow-creatures and to the glory of God.

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(2.) For a blessing upon all who are already engaged in combating the enemy "strong drink," that strength, wisdom, faith, and love may be given them in the work.

(3.) That more labourers may be induced to "come over and help" in this great cause.

(4.) That the eyes of God's children may be opened to view this matter more seriously, and that they may be led to inquire, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have *me* to do?"

"He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry, *when He shall hear it He will answer thee.*" (Isa. xxx. 19.) Shall not such a promise as this stir us all up to united and fervent prayer, that the terrible curse which afflicts our land may be removed from our midst?

It will be seen that the suggestions for counteracting drunkenness thus far mentioned may be adopted as well by non-abstainers as by abstainers; but there remains another method still to be noticed,

which experience has proved more effectual than any of the foregoing, except—it need scarcely be said—the power of prayer.

12. If, then, we would do all in our power to counteract the drinking customs around us, let us adopt the principles of total abstinence in theory *and practice*. How often one still meets with the old argument that this is "unnecessary for those who are able to control themselves." But what are we better than others of equal birth, position, and education that we should stand where they have fallen? It is well, too, to remind ourselves that almost every drunkard was once a moderate drinker.

But even supposing that a man has been a moderate drinker all his life, never once having exceeded moderation, has it not often happened that his son, his brother, or his friend, *in attempting to follow his example*, has fallen? And who is to determine what "moderation" is, for what is strict moderation to one man, may be positive inebriation to another. Shall we

not, therefore, be willing to use a little self-denial, and walk by the safe path of total abstinence, into which we can encourage all to follow us, knowing that it will prove equally safe for them as for us?

It is almost universally acknowledged that total abstinence is the only safe course for the drunkard, but in this case the pledge becomes "the drunkard's badge," and it requires more moral courage than the poor fellow possesses to stand alone, and, as it were, aloof from all "respectable people."

Would it not be more Christ-like to invite him to come over to our side, that we may have the privilege of standing by and encouraging our weak and tempted brother? or, in St. Paul's own words, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom. xv. 1.)

Shall we not then resolve to show our sympathy with our fallen brothers and sisters, by abstaining from that which has led them astray?

It is impossible for me to get into the  
village homes these pages may tell me some-  
thing of the life inside but thoroughly  
and impartially to consider this great ques-  
tion and in all earnestness of purpose and  
sincerity of heart to inquire "What will  
village life have to be?"



VII.

# THE FROST-BITTEN DAHLIAS.

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"Trials do not cause human frailty, but they  
serve to display what a man really is."

*Thomas à Kempis.*







*THE FROST-BITTEN  
DAHLIAS.*



**I**T was a bright morning late in autumn, and as I wandered down the garden, I looked with admiration and delight on the beautiful flowers which bordered each side of the path.

Although November was nearly over, the beds were still gay, and my attention was specially attracted by the fine, glossy-leaved dahlias, thickly studded with their showy and many-coloured balls of flower. Yes, thought I, as I pursued my way, I must come to-morrow morning and gather flowers for a fresh nosegay.

Accordingly, basket and scissors in hand, I made my way into the garden the next morning, but what a sight awaited me! At first I could hardly believe my eyes!

What had become of the row of handsome dahlias which at intervals had formed the border of the path? There in their place, were tall, black stems, covered with shrivelled black leaves, and moist black balls. Could these represent the beautiful leaves and flowers on which I had gazed only a few hours before?

Seeing the gardener at a little distance, I approached him and said, "See, John, I have brought out my basket to cut some dahlias, and I am too late, for they are all dead. Has there been much frost in the night?"

"Well, ma'am," replied he, "it was sharpish for a bit, but it don't take much to nip up them dahlias; they just give in at the least bit of frost."

My empty basket still hung on my arm. I had depended chiefly on the dahlias for my bouquet. Was there nothing left with which to fill it? Why, yes; there was the mignonette, sweeter and fresher than ever, and the pansies were still bravely holding up their heads. Several other flowers too

were looking as if unconscious of there having been any frost, so, after all, I returned with a nosegay, which, if not so bright as I intended, was pretty and sweet-scented.

Strange, thought I, that those grand dahlias should wither at the first touch of frost, and yet that these humbler-looking flowers should have borne it so bravely. And as I arranged the flowers, I thought how like is the natural world to the spiritual. Do we not sometimes find that those Christians who have made the loudest profession of religion, as long as they have been living in prosperity, will appear crushed and stripped of all hope or comfort at the first breath of adversity ; while others, who have been quietly and consistently living for God, who have perhaps said less but acted more are only strengthened by affliction. As some leaves are the sweeter for being bruised, so these souls shine the brighter for God when all around is dark and sad. What kind of religion is ours ? Will it bear the cutting blast of

sorrow and affliction, or is it only fair weather Christianity? Such religion as our Saviour described, when He spoke of those who have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time ; afterward, when persecution or affliction ariseth for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended.\*

“Many love Jesus as long as things go well with them. Many praise and bless Him, as long as they receive certain consolations from Him ; but if Jesus were to hide His face from them, or forsake them for a little while, then they would begin to murmur or grow depressed. But those who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some comfort of their own, love and bless Him in every tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the highest consolation ; and if He never gave them comfort at all, they would still praise Him and ever give Him thanks.”†

\* S. Mark iv. 17.

† Thomas á Kempis.

VIII.

‘THROUGH MUCH  
TRIBULATION.’

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“For gold must be tried by fire  
As a heart must be tried by pain.”

*Adelaide A. Proctor.*

“Fiery trials make golden Christians.”





*"THROUGH MUCH  
TRIBULATION."*

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**I**T was spring time, and the trees were once more clothed with their robe of fresh bright green, when a lady one day asked her niece, who was staying with her, if she would go with her to the cottage of a poor bed-ridden woman.

She had often accompanied her during previous visits in her errands of love both to this bed-ridden woman and to others, for her Aunt was one of those who loved to carry help and comfort, both temporal and spiritual, to the sick, the sorrowful, and the sinful. During the past two years, her niece had learnt to take a personal interest in heavenly things, and in God's dealings with His children, and she now gladly assented to her aunt's proposal. After



walking for some distance along the road, they turned into the wood, in which was the cottage they were about to visit, and through the trees, only now bursting forth into leaf, the sun shot its rays, lighting up the path before them. Every thing seemed specially bright and beautiful that day ; the birds were singing as merrily overhead, the spring flowers were scattered in wild profusion all around them, and as they walked, they gathered handfuls of the lovely orchis, for which that wood is noted.


And soon they reached the cottage, and the lady going up first to ascertain whether the sick woman was well enough to see a comparative stranger, called her niece to follow her.

There lay Ellen Field on her clean white curtained bed, just as she had lain for many years, with her patient, cheerful face, her Bible and favorite books on a little table by her side, as well as some needlework, which she said amused her "when the pain was not quite so bad." On inquiring how long it was that she had

been lying there, she answered, "Twenty-two years last January I took to my bed, and I have never been up since."

"Twenty-two years last January," repeated her younger visitor, "why that was the very month in which I was born, and to think that you have been lying here *the whole of my life time!*" And quickly there passed through her mind the recollection of the happy years she had spent, the various places she had visited, the friends she had made, the lovely scenery she had witnessed, even the walk she had just taken through the woods, amidst the bright sunshine and lovely flowers: every thing seemed more vivid as she remembered that all these years this poor woman had never left her bed in this little room.


Ellen Field had been younger then than she herself was now, and the whole of that time had hardly known what it was to be free from suffering; and yet her face was bright and happy, and all her conversation was of God's love and mercy to her. There was no need to tell of the



peace of mind, that she enjoyed, for it shone out in every line of her countenance.

Would that all who seek their happiness in the pleasures of the world could have seen this sick and suffering one, in her upper chamber in the cottage in the wood, separated from the world, and from all the pleasures it can afford; would that they could have seen her bright smile, as she spoke of the peace of God which passeth all understanding! Surely our Saviour's words would have for them a new meaning, "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Might it not make them inquire of their own hearts what there was in all the world and its pleasures which could afford them peace, calmness, even a holy joy and gladness, under such circumstances as surrounded this poor sufferer?

The visit above narrated was the last which the younger lady ever paid to the cottage in the wood, for before she went again to stay with her Aunt, Ellen Field



"THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION." 71

had gone to be "with Christ, which is far better."

"Safe in the Lord His saints may rest,  
And calmly wait His will,  
Though poor and tried they yet are blest,  
Their God is gracious still !"





## IX.

# REJOICE.

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"On our way rejoicing,  
Gladly let us go ;  
Conquered hath our Leader,  
Vanquished is the foe !  
Christ without, our safety,  
Christ within, our joy ;  
Who, if we be faithful,  
Can our hope destroy ?  
On our way rejoicing,  
As we homeward move,  
Hearken to our praises,  
Oh, Thou God of love !"  
*Rev. J. S. B. Monsell, LL.D.*






## *REJOICE.*



**H**OW is it that we meet so many gloomy Christians? The question is often asked and the fact regretted, but still it exists.

I remember hearing of a man who afterwards became well-known for his zealous work for God, who stated that though many earnest but gloomy Christians had tried their best to convince him that the service of God was the happiest and best, they had utterly failed; but that some years later he was convinced of the fact by seeing the brightness and joyousness of a follower of Christ, and from that time had cast in his lot with them: reminding one of the saying that, "Of all the lights you





carry in your face, joy will reach the furthest out to sea."\*

I was one day talking to a young man who had lately become very decided in his religious views. He told me that he had been very fond of singing, but that he had just burnt all his songs. He had begun by burning only the comic songs; soon followed the secular songs, which in their turn were quickly followed by the sacred ones. I expressed some astonishment that even should he feel it right to burn the rest, he should not have spared the sacred songs; but the young man answered that he had been so devotedly fond of music that he felt convinced that it would not be right for him any longer to indulge in it.

I asked him whether he supposed that God did not like to see His children happy, and if he could account for the beautiful songs of the birds, the loveliness of the flowers, and the many other charming sights and sounds that meet us at every turn in the

\* H. W. Beecher.

world of nature, and which give us so much pleasure; but all in vain, the music (because it gave such pleasure) must be abandoned, and scarcely could he be prevailed upon to remain in the room when a little later I was asked to sing a sacred song.

In a subsequent conversation it was urged how much there is in God's word about rejoicing, joy, gladness; and it was promised that a list of passages on the subject should be sent to him. If any one has the least doubt as to whether it is right for Christians to be happy and bright, let them search for themselves, and they will perhaps be astonished at the number of texts on the subject, no less than at the strong and decided language to be found in some of them.

Surely more persons, especially young persons, would be attracted by the religion of Christ if those who profess it had more brightness about them, for who indeed has a better right to be happy than those who enjoy a sense of sins forgiven, a mind at

peace with God, and who have a heavenly home in prospect.

“And if I become a Christian, must I really give up theatres, operas, and balls?”

This question was asked not long ago by a young lady who had become really anxious about her soul. I endeavoured to shew her that she had, as it were, begun at the wrong end, and that it is not so much a question of “giving up” as of “receiving.” Let us first receive Christ into the heart, with all the joy and peace He brings, and then we shall prove the truth of what has been so well called “the expulsive power of a new affection.”\*

If we saw a child playing with a knife, and in danger of hurting itself, should we seize it and attempt to wrench it from the child? Would not the little hand be closed all the more tightly over the dangerous plaything? But if we take some pretty, attractive toy and offer it to the child, does not the little hand loosen its tight grasp upon the knife, and as it drops to

\* Dr. Chalmers.

the floor we pick it up and carry it out of reach, while the child, so happy over its new-found treasure, does not even miss it.

Thus it is that the heart which receives the love of Christ will be so full of its new-found joy, that the pleasures which before had proved so fascinating and ensnaring will be found to have lost their charm, for indeed the world has no attractions to offer which can compare with the joy and peace which Jesus gives to those who truly love Him.

“As by the light of opening day  
The stars are all concealed,  
So earthly pleasures fade away  
When Jesus is revealed.”

It is indeed true that “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”\*

Let it be our endeavour to “serve the Lord with gladness,”† that those around may see our joy, and long to be partakers of its secret, or in the words of a living

\* Proverbs iii. 17.    † Ps. c. 2.

writer, "Let all who see you see how happy your Christianity makes you, and be constrained to say, 'I wish I were like that man, he is all sunshine.'" \*

"Why should His people now be sad?  
None have such reason to be glad  
As those redeem'd to God;  
Jesus, the mighty Saviour, lives!  
To them eternal life He gives,  
The purchase of His blood."

\* Rev. F. Morse, M.A.



